

**ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
#288**

**JULIUS ALBERT FINNERN
USS *MONAGHAN*, SURVIVOR**

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 6, 1998
BY DANIEL MARTINEZ**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

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**USS *ARIZONA* MEMORIAL
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

Daniel Martinez (DM): Okay. The following oral history interview was conducted by Daniel Martinez, historian for the National Park Service at the USS *Arizona* Memorial. The taping was done at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 6, 1998, at approximately 5:10 in the afternoon. The person being interviewed is Julius Finnern, who was aboard the USS *Monaghan*, DD-354, on December 7, 1941. For the record, Jay, would you state your full name?

Julius Finnern (JF): Julius Albert Finnern.

DM: And your place of birth?

JF: Denison, Iowa.

DM: And the date of birth.

JF: June 17, 1919.

DM: And could you tell me, in 1941, what you considered as your hometown?

JF: Omaha, Nebraska.

DM: Omaha, Nebraska. Where did you grow up, basically?

JF: I spent the first four years of my life in Iowa.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: Oh, I shouldn't say years. I was in the fourth grade when my dad moved off the farm. We moved to Omaha.

DM: So when you started out as a young, as a baby, you were on a farm?

JF: Yeah.

DM: And why did your father leave the farm—the Great Depression, or other reasons?

JF: Well, you know, the depression, he lost, practically lost everything.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: His grandfather owned a large portion of Chicago, he owned his farm.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: He lost, that was everything he lost. He was practically destitute after the depression of '29.

DM: And so you're one of the families that was deeply affected by the depression?

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: And once you moved off the farm, where did you move to then?

JF: Omaha.

DM: Omaha. And what did your father do there?

JF: He got a job at Armour Packing Company.

DM: The big meat packing company?

JF: Yeah, mm-hm.

DM: And that's pretty rough work, isn't it?

JF: Yeah. My dad was a big, rough man. Yeah.

DM: Was your dad your size or...

JF: No, he's bigger. He was 240.

DM: Two-forty and what was his height?

JF: Six-two, which is basically what I am.

DM: Yeah. And now, your mother, what did she do? Was she a homemaker or...

JF: Well, she'd done various things. In the early years of my life, she was a practical nurse.

DM: Okay.

JF: And she worked for a doctor and when we moved to Omaha, then she went to work wherever she could. And she went to work for the Aksarben Coliseum Group.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And which is Nebraska spelled backwards.

DM: (Chuckles)

JF: And we got through the depression although my dad's employment got restricted about three days a week. But also where we lived, we had a pretty darn big—and my dad, being a farmer, we had a big garden. So we survived quite nicely.

DM: Did a lot of packing in that house, did you?

JF: Pardon?

DM: Did you do a lot of packing of vegetables and stuff to get you through the winters?

JF: Oh, oh yeah. We preserved everything. My mother used to can a whole flock of chickens when they no longer could be—for laying, you know, when the laying season was over. All this stuff and the fruit jar. I went through this with some high school kids. They were amazed. The instructor, these are senior people, senior high school and he wanted me to talk not only Pearl Harbor, he wanted to tell these kids what the depression was like.

DM: Yeah.

JF: And I told them about forty-five percent to fifty percent unemployment.

DM: Right.

JF: And then the little talk I gave 'em about the depression, how we survived.

DM: Right.

JF: I asked them, the final question, how many people you think starved to death during that depression. And they gave me various answers. The correct answer is nobody.

DM: Right.

JF: Nobody starved. People shared what they had. And...

DM: The country pulled together during that tough time.

JF: Oh, you better believe that they did.

DM: Soup lines and all of that stuff.

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: Well...

JF: Well, now we got food pantries. What's the difference?

DM: (Chuckles) Well...

JF: Good point, huh.

DM: Yeah, it is.

JF: And the best, what they claim is to be the best economy in years.

DM: Right.

JF: And we got food pantries.

DM: Right.

JF: And half the military is eligible for food stamps, as far as income is concerned.

DM: Right. That used to be true of the park service too.

JF: Yeah.

DM: How many was in your family?

JF: Eight, well, eight children and two...

DM: Eight children? That's a big family. Where did you fit in that?

JF: Let's see—no. My brother, John, he's deceased. He's older. There's Ida, Marie, Minnie and then Frank. Frank is a retired air force lieutenant colonel. He had I don't know how many flights over Europe and he wound up the war in B-29's.

DM: So he flew B-17's?

JF: What?

DM: Did he go over in B-17's and...

JF: No, he got drafted and then he found out he already had a pilot's license, so...

DM: Okay. They put him in bombers?

JF: Yeah, they put him in bombers, fighter planes first.

DM: Oh, fighter planes.

JF: And then bombers. And he wound up in the B-29's. And he's got quite a war record too.

DM: Is that everybody in the family?

JF: No. Then I got—then after Frank, eleven months later, I guess my dad got excited and eleven months later, I was born.

DM: (Laughs)

JF: And then there was a seven-year lapse and then my brother, Robert, was born. Okay.

DM: Is that the youngest?

JF: No.

DM: Oh.

JF: And then there came Richard.

DM: Oh my god.

JF: And my brother Robert is a retired chief, like I am.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And of course my eleven-month old, year-old brother, he was an Air Force colonel, lieutenant colonel, and then he retired.

DM: What was life like in the Finnern family? That's a big, big family.

JF: Well, it was surprisingly good. My oldest brother used to beat me up every once in a while when the folks left.
(Laughs) But as it turned out, as time went on, he no longer could do this.

DM: Yeah.

JF: He just...

DM: You got bigger.

JF: I got bigger than he did, so...

DM: Well, that sounds familiar. You went to high school in...

JF: No, I never went to high school.

DM: Oh, tell me about that.

JF: Anybody who could get a job got a job then.

DM: So you went to your basic elementary school?

JF: Yeah.

DM: Did you finish eighth grade?

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: Okay.

JF: It was a—might as well been a high school because it was a parochial school.

DM: Okay. So you were a Catholic family?

JF: No. We were Catholic, but not Roman Catholic.

DM: Right.

JF: We were Lutherans.

DM: Okay. Gotcha.

JF: And it was a pretty good education. I worked for a college graduate one time. He used to ask me how to spell simple words that I felt. I'd spell 'em everyday, you know. This guy went to college. This is ridiculous!

DM: Well, that spelling is a mysterious thing. So you worked odd jobs and tried to make money for you and your family?

JF: Oh yeah. I worked for a vineyard, which is the most boring job I ever had in my life. The guy must have had, to me, it looked like he had ten million acres and I had to tie them

things with three strands of wire. It was an un-ending job. So boring. And worked in a riding academy for the, you know, the cleaning. And finally got a job at a place called Gross Box Company and I got promoted to scope their heating system boiler. And it's the first time I ever—and I blew up that boiler. (Laughs)

DM: I guess that paved the way for you to be an engineer, right?

JF: It sure did! It sure did! It taught me, this is a fire tube boiler. They told me, don't smother that fire.

DM: Right.

JF: 'Cause we had to start that fire with this material that fell off the saws, the scrap stuff.

DM: Right.

JF: And then we had to, it was a sawmill type of engine. And then you had to burn the sawdust, the green stuff.

DM: Right.

JF: And, you know, this fifteen or sixteen-year old kid, you know, he's feeling really good and just shoveling. Totally blanketed that fire. And not knowing the results of all these little spirals that was coming out of there, and this is a water tube, I mean a fire tube boiler. And that whole thing was filled with explosive gasses, is what come off this combustion. I was alongside of that thing. This thing had sixteen doors on it, and I was alongside of the thing, putting water in that thing, when the lick of flame come through there and that—it blew half those doors right off their hinges.

DM: How could you—did you get injured?

JF: No, not a scratch. I was just lucky I was on the side.

DM: So it scared...

JF: Everything went out on both ends.

DM: Scared the daylights out of you, I suppose.

JF: Oh yeah. And then they had a big smokestack. And half of this thing is underground, and the thing looked like a teepee.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And right out the center was the smokestack, and that smokestack went up and it flew down, it came down on the opposite side of where I was at. So totally uninjured, but scared to death. They decided, well, the person that owned that facility, he got quite heavily fined for putting a non-experienced person firing that boiler.

DM: Yeah.

JF: Anyway, I wound up in the navy, ended up in the fire room. I was in the—that was my normal workstation, was the boiler room.

DM: Was in the fire room.

JF: Yeah.

DM: Let's talk about that. When did you join the navy?

JF: March 13th, 1940.

DM: You know the exact date?

JF: Mm-hm.

DM: And why did you join the navy?

JF: I seen the movie.

DM: What movie...

JF: *Hell's Angels* [*Hell Divers*].

DM: *Hell's Angels*?

JF: Yeah.

DM: Clark Gable in that?

JF: Yup, he was, but my idol was Wallace Beery. (Laughs) You probably never even heard of that guy.

DM: Oh sure, Wallace Beery. He was tremendous.

JF: Anyway, he was a chief petty officer and that's where I wanted to go and I went there.

DM: Isn't that what you ended up?

JF: Yeah, and I got recommended for warrant, but I had what I wanted. I wanted to be a chief. I stayed one.

DM: Well, Wallace Beery played a pretty interesting role in *Hells Angels*.

JF: Yeah.

DM: Did you want to model yourself after him?

JF: Well, sort of.

DM: Okay. And did that actually happen?

JF: No, I don't really think so. I was a lot kinder and gentler than he was.

DM: Okay. So where did you go? You enlisted where? In Omaha?

JF: In Omaha.

DM: In Omaha. And then where did they send you?

JF: To Great Lakes.

DM: Okay, so you took the train up to Great Lakes?

JF: Bus.

DM: Bus. And hopefully you didn't go up there in the winter.

JF: Did, March, and still snow.

DM: That was pretty rough, wasn't it?

JF: Yeah.

DM: And then where did you go from Great Lakes?

JF: Well, then I went aboard the [*USS*] *Monaghan*, of course.

DM: So you were assigned that ship?

JF: Assigned to the *Monaghan* there.

DM: Okay. And where was the *Monaghan* at that time?

JF: She was out, part of Hawaiian Detachment.

DM: Okay.

JF: Yeah.

DM: So you joined her when?

JF: In June of 1940.

DM: How did you get to Hawaii?

JF: On the USS *Honolulu*.

DM: You went out on the cruiser *Honolulu*?

JF: Yeah. They load us aboard a tug and we went aboard the *Honolulu* for transportation out.

DM: Kind of nice ship.

JF: Got in trouble. Got in trouble right away.

DM: What'd you get in trouble for? Now you were a seaman at that time?

JF: I was apprentice seaman.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: Yeah. I had, you know, we had to roll our clothes.

DM: Right.

JF: And wrap it.

DM: Your hammock and all that stuff.

JF: And this damn ditty bag.

DM: Right.

JF: And didn't occur to me that you're supposed to set something down and salute the colors and the OD.

DM: As you came aboard?

JF: Yeah. But anyway, I got educated real quick. (Chuckles)

DM: And some chief was watching that, right?

JF: No, it was an officer.

DM: Oh boy.

JF: Yeah.

DM: So you got put on report right away?

JF: No, no, he didn't put me on report, but he made me go back, you know, aboard that tug and start all over again. And so then I dutifully set everything down, rendered a snappy salute to the colors, and then requested permission to come aboard.

DM: You thought you might be going aboard a ferry or something when you first came aboard there?

JF: (Chuckles) Well, basically, that's what it turned out to be although it's a pretty expensive ferry.

DM: Yup. So you take this cruiser and you left, what, San Diego or San Francisco you said?

JF: We left San Diego.

DM: San Diego. Go across the big Pacific and what was your first vision of Hawaii?

JF: Holy Moses, was I disappointed, you know. Coming from Nebraska, Pearl Harbor, this had to be one of those places where native people was jumping off and pearl diving. Yeah, right.

DM: Right.

JF: And didn't occur. I will tell you, every place I've been, I've been disappointed.

DM: (Laughs) Is that right? That's interesting.

JF: Number one, I used to read the cowboy books, you know.

DM: Right.

JF: And I heard about this raging, roaring Rio Grande River.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And I seen it in Texas.

DM: Right.

JF: El Paso, 'cause we went down to El Paso. In Nebraska, we call it, that thing was a crick in Nebraska.

DM: Right.

JF: But I guess somewhere it was big river. But it didn't turn out to be.

DM: Yeah, it goes through the Grand Canyon. (Chuckles) It roars pretty good through there.

JF: But anyway, then of course, Pearl Harbor, it was nice although...

DM: Do you remember seeing Diamond Head as you steamed...

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: Yeah.

JF: 'Cause I never heard of Diamond Head at that time.

DM: Oh really?

JF: Yeah. Well, you know.

DM: So when you, when the *Honolulu* came in and it tied up in Pearl Harbor, then you transferred from there over to...

JF: Oh, we transferred to another destroyer because the *Monaghan* was at Lahaina Roads.

DM: Oh really?

JF: Yeah.

DM: Okay.

JF: So we got ferried over there. And three of our people that enlisted in Omaha went aboard the *Monaghan* and two of the three, or one of the three perished on it. But myself and the other guy, we got transferred before the *Monaghan* capsized in that typhoon.

DM: That's right.

JF: Yeah. So Typhoon Cobra in 1944.

DM: That was a big one.

JF: Yeah.

DM: We'll talk a little bit about that when we get a little bit...

JF: Okay.

DM: ...in our history. When you finally get aboard the *Monaghan*, was that in '41 or still in '40?

JF: No, that was in '40. Yeah, June of '40.

DM: June of '40. Your station at that time was going to be the engine room?

JF: No, no. No, no.

DM: Okay. What was your duty station?

JF: I was just on the deck force.

DM: Okay.

JF: But I noticed right away, I noticed right away that the engineers up there, they didn't have to work between watches. And I thought that was pretty neat because they'd be up there, we'd stand our watches and then off watch we had to do all kinds of work.

DM: Right.

JF: And them engineers would be sunbathing up there.

DM: Right.

JF: And I thought that was pretty neat, so I started putting applications to go down to the engine room, or the fire room. After, I think, the fourth or fifth time, they let me do this.

DM: Did you realize that it was pretty hot down there?

JF: Oh yeah. Yeah, it's pretty hot. Yeah, about 135 sometimes, 140.

DM: Yeah.

JF: But you know, you had the big blower.

DM: And make sure you stand by one, right?

JF: Not only that, in those days, you used to get rags aboard.

DM: Right.

JF: And there could be anything in that bundle. And what we looked for was women's bloomers. The kind that snap, the elastic in waist and around the legs. I don't know if you've ever heard of one those or seen one. But anyway, they used to get these bloomers.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And see, that would give additional ventilation to another person, 'cause we'd—the stuff around the waist, we'd snap it around that air vent and then we'd have two streams of air coming out where the legs are.

DM: (Laughs) I'm trying to imagine these bloomers and they would billow out.

JF: Yeah, they would billow out.

DM: They would shoot air in different directions.

JF: Yeah.

DM: Interesting.

JF: Yeah. (Laughs)

DM: I wonder if the designers ever thought they had functional use.

JF: Well, we call 'em apple pickers. We always say the Washington state women used to climb the trees and snap the thing open and fill it up with apples and climb down. But I don't know if that's true or not.

DM: Well, I think it was some sailor's imagination working overtime. But who knows. So you're working down there and you made some cruises back and forth to San Diego and back...

JF: Yeah.

DM: ...a couple times. But then...

(Taping stops, then resumes)

DM: The *Monaghan* is one of several destroyers, cruisers and battleships that joined the Pacific fleet on a more permanent status in Hawaiian waters.

JF: Well, she was Hawaiian Detachment prior...

DM: Prior to that.

JF: ...when I went aboard.

DM: So these other ships joined her.

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: She was permanently home-ported at Pearl Harbor.

JF: Yeah.

DM: So, I'm glad you made that straight, because there is some confusion of when the Pacific fleet came out, what destroyers, what, you know, what was part of permanent part of the Pacific fleet and what was part of the Hawaii detachment, I think it was called, right.

JF: Yeah, COMDESHAWDET, is the Commander Destroyer Hawaiian Detachment.

DM: Now, what was the old man like on the *Monaghan*?

JF: Well, during the attack, the man we had during the attack was [Lieutenant] Commander [*William P.*] Burford.

DM: Right.

JF: He was one terrific type person.

DM: Right.

JF: And of course we had another guy in front of him that really, nobody really cared for, 'cause he was a, he loved to—you shoved your hat back. Even your hat had to be worn regulation.

DM: Okay.

JF: And, which of course, he was quite an irritant. One time I we had trouble with the whistle And I would stand up to disconnect it and bring it down. And that whistle was this far away from Captain Van Bergen was his name. And he knew everyone by name. And he said, "Finnern, lay up to the bridge."

So I come down the stack, up the deck, climb all the way back abridge, and he told me to keep my hat on square. Anyway, if you think that movie guy was, you know—but anyway, yeah, Van Bergen.

DM: Talking about Queeg, are you?

JF: Yeah. But anyway, Captain Van Bergen turned out quite well with him because we ran aground prior to Pearl Harbor.

DM: I didn't know about that.

JF: Yeah, we ran aground and...

DM: Where did you run aground at?

JF: Offshore patrol. It was on offshore patrol, docking ship.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And we did run aground. We ran over some thing and then in probably in deep water, and they gave emergency astern and cruises right on this sand bar, or whatever is down there. And so that rumbled us up a little bit. I was sleeping during that. I wasn't on watch. But anyway, it was an all-day thing getting us off and getting us squared away and then we had to go to the navy yard and somebody had to get...

DM: Did it bend the props?

JF: Yeah, and somebody had to get punished for this of course. And being the captain, or the skipper of the ship, he was the one that was chosen and he was shanghaied. They usually remove points and then shanghai 'em to China.

DM: Right.

JF: Over there, so then he went aboard—I forget the name of the cruiser—and they was got under attack during the war.

DM: Was he on the *Houston*?

JF: No. Yeah, the name escapes me, but anyway, Van Bergen was a gunnery officer on that ship and I don't know, the captain got killed or something happened to the executive officer. Anyway, it was up to Van Bergen to take command and bring that ship out of there, which he did. And he had lost his points but got everything back because he brought that ship out of harm's way, so to speak. And brought it into New York.

DM: So that must have been a battle down in the Solomons or something like that, where the cruisers were involved. You think it was down there?

JF: No, it was in China. In, up in there. Up in that China area.

DM: Okay.

JF: But anyway, then we got Van Bergen, Commander Van Bergen—not Van Bergen, but Burford.

DM: Burford.

JF: And he received a Navy Cross for the Pearl Harbor action.

DM: Right.

JF: And he was quite a guy. He knew everybody's name too, but he got transferred.

DM: After the attack?

JF: Yeah, after the attack was over and he took over as executive officer of Treasure Island.

DM: Okay.

JF: Okay.

DM: In San Francisco.

JF: Yeah. And I went to see him because I had not—out of boot leave, I had not been, I had not seen my folks. So I applied for leave and they says I couldn't have any leave until I got classified for diesel school. Okay. Anyway, I got classified for diesel school and the following day I was on a draft for Norfolk, Virginia with no delay in orders or nothing. So Burford said, had said when he left the ship, "If you guys have any problem when you go to Treasure Island, come and see me."

I thought well, it's worth a shot, you know. So I went to see him and he called in a ship's clerk and wanted to know when the next diesel school started. And he told that ship's clerk to change my orders. And on the way out, the ship's clerk give me a bunch of heat, you know, he's a warrant yeoman. Give me a bunch of heat that people, we got people going out in the war zone. He didn't ask me where I'd been.

DM: Right.

JF: But anyway, I already had somewhere between six and nine battle stars at that point in time.

DM: Right.

JF: And of course he didn't know that. So anyway, I got my twenty-five days delay in orders. I went to two diesel schools.

DM: That's great.

JF: Yeah.

DM: So he came through.

JF: It did, yeah. He came through then.

DM: Let me take you to the, just a month before Pearl Harbor. Were you guys doing a lot of maneuvers and were you...

JF: Yeah, we basically were occupied with offshore patrol. And being docking ship.

DM: Okay. And would you escort other ships or would you be part of a battle group that went out?

JF: No, no. We hung around there pretty close.

DM: Did you do any guarding of the defensive sea area off Pearl Harbor?

JF: Yeah, that was offshore patrol.

DM: Offshore patrol, okay. So you, the *Monaghan* and the *Ward* and other ships like you, that's what was your duty as the Hawaii Detachment to...

JF: Yeah.

DM: Do you know much about the offshore patrol area? Do you know what was allowed and not allowed, or did you know? Because I know that ships had to announce they were coming into the area. Submarines couldn't be submerged. And...

JF: I don't know too much about it except you don't run aground when you do it.

DM: Yeah, well those are tricky waters out there.

JF: I know.

DM: What would you think the state of readiness of your ship was in 1941?

JF: Oh, we were ready. We had a...

DM: Was that a pretty good crew that you had there?

JF: Oh, we had a good crew.

DM: That crew had been together for some time and...

JF: Yeah.

DM: ...knew what they were doing?

JF: Mm-hm.

DM: Now, how...

JF: And we had a lot of E's on our stack for excellent, with hash marks. Gunnery, engineering, the whole works. We had a good crew.

DM: I have a great picture of the *Monaghan*. I think it was taken in the thirties.

JF: Yeah.

DM: It's in maneuvers off Hawaii and there's a smoke screen that's laid out. She's dashing through. There's like rockets coming out behind her or something. It's a gorgeous picture.

JF: Yeah.

DM: And it's, you know, when they had the big numbers on the...

JF: Yeah.

DM: So mid-thirties, I suspect. But it's a beautiful picture of the *Monaghan*, but I often wondered what the readiness of that crew was, in the sense of experience and it sounds like it was a fairly experienced vessel.

JF: Yes.

DM: That there had been some sailors.

JF: Yes, it was.

DM: How were the chiefs on board?

JF: The chiefs?

DM: Yeah.

JF: Oh, they were all pretty good, except that chief boatswain mate that I worked for.

DM: Right.

JF: Yeah, he—finally the worst job was scraping paint off of aluminum. You know, you can't make much progress, you know. And he stuck his head through the porthole and said, "I may not make you work hard, but I sure as hell can make you work long."

(Laughter)

DM: Remember that, huh?

JF: Oh yeah.

DM: Yeah, that's always a confidence builder.

JF: Yeah.

DM: Taking you now a little bit further up and in fact, it's fifty-seven years ago today.

JF: Yeah.

DM: It was December 6, Saturday.

JF: Yeah.

DM: December 6, what was that day like for you?

JF: It was a ready duty day. The ship had the ready duty.

DM: Explain to me what ready duty means.

JF: Ready duty is the ship stands by with a full crew and partial steam is up. Sort of keeping the engines warm, you know, the turbines.

DM: Right.

JF: And you just stand by waiting for a casualty at sea and you go out and assist.

DM: Okay.

JF: And that's a twenty-four hour duty and we was to be relieved at 0800 hours. And that's how we spent that day. We had the full crew aboard.

DM: Now, doing offshore patrol at that time was the *Ward*. The *Ward* had just departed on the 6th.

JF: No, the *Ward* was doing offshore.

DM: Right, doing the offshore duty.

JF: And...

DM: You guys were in East Loch, correct?

JF: Yeah. And we were ordered to go out and assist the *Ward* after she sunk that submarine.

DM: Right.

JF: So...

DM: And when did you get that, do you know when that order came in...

JF: That was shortly before 7:55.

DM: Okay.

JF: The planes were not yet there.

DM: So you...

JF: But the *Ward*...

DM: ...were you guys underway then?

JF: No, we weren't underway then, but...

DM: Getting up steam.

JF: ...didn't take us long. Actually, as far as Pearl Harbor is concerned, we left the harbor after, I think—I got the deck log at home—I think it was 8:25. So basically, we had thirty minutes of the Japanese attack.

DM: Yeah. I just want to go back to December 6. You didn't—nobody had liberty?

JF: No.

DM: You were there and so you stood your watches—well, you didn't have a watch to stand, but you were down below?

JF: No, we stood watches.

DM: Oh, you did?

JF: Yeah, well, you got generators running and stuff like that.

DM: So what was your duty on the sixth? Do you remember what hours you were working?

JF: Mine, I don't know. But we stood watches, auxiliary watches they called it. But basically, at that time, at that point in time, I was in the boiler room and I was standing watches on

that boiler, the steaming boiler which supplied steam for the turbines generator.

DM: Did you get breakfast at all that morning?

JF: December 7, oh yeah. Yeah.

DM: Did you get topside at all before the attack and what kind of morning was it?

JF: Oh, it was a nice sun-shiny morning.

DM: Beautiful?

JF: Yeah. In fact, I got a painting about this big. It shows the whole nest of destroyers. We were outboard because of the...

DM: _____

JF: ...the ready duty stuff. And the rest, you know, they was alongside the tender. And that was always close to Pearl City.

DM: Right.

JF: And it just shows land there now. It shows a little more than land.

DM: Yeah, there's a shopping center there now.

JF: Yeah, during that time, you'd see some fires burning up in the hills and stuff like that, but now it's Pearl City Tavern that used to sit on, was a typical tavern.

DM: Yeah.

JF: You know, if you can visualize a building sitting on some piling.

DM: Yeah.

JF: And a fan...

DM: Open air?

JF: Yeah. Reminds you of Humphrey Bogart movie.

DM: *Casablanca* movie. We're going to stop this tape right now and we're going to switch tapes and then we'll talk about December...

END OF TAPE #10

TAPE #11

DM: Well, Jay, this takes us to that eventful day, December 7, 1941, and as you said, you were down in the engine room.

JF: I had liberty that day.

DM: Oh, you had liberty that day. Okay.

JF: Yeah, December 7.

DM: Okay, so set the record straight for me. What was your—how did your day start out, December 7?

JF: Well, I wanted to go to church. We had to go ashore. We had no chaplain aboard. And my family was quite religious and being a product of a parochial school, I wanted to go to church. And I put on my first—first time I've been able to afford one—it was a brand new suit of what they call silver

tassel whites. And I was just ready to go ashore and come out of the after deckhouse and flip the cigarette over the side and was going to the boat, toward the boat. And didn't quite get there when general quarters went off.

DM: Now, where were church services going to be held at?

JF: It was on the beach somewhere. I don't recall where.

DM: Was it on Ford Island, or was it going to be...

JF: No, it was somewhere else.

DM: In the naval station?

JF: Yeah, yeah.

DM: Now you say you were walking to this, the aft section of the ship.

JF: Yeah, well, the liberty boat alongside. But the after deckhouse, that's out of the berthing compartment and then walked up.

DM: Now, was this before the prep flag was sound, was raised?

JF: Yeah, I was in the process of between the after deckhouse and that liberty boat when the alarm went.

DM: And what did you think? Was it a drill or what went through your mind?

JF: No, I just went to the battle station. I didn't know what it was but we found out shortly. 'Cause shortly after that, the plane that actually sunk the *Utah* flew right over our fantail.

DM: Okay.

JF: And circled down and...

DM: Was he strafing you guys at all?

JF: Well, he was strafing coming in and when—I laugh now—I still recall the guy's name. His name was Batson and on our forward borders, we still had the stack covers on. They had the stack covered with a canvas tarp.

DM: Right.

JF: To keep the rain out, okay. And he's trying to get that off and this plane was strafing but it was not even, I guess it wasn't even close to him. But that's very thin sheet metal, those stacks, and he was ducking behind that for protection, which would have been nil.

DM: No protection at all, huh.

JF: None, none whatsoever.

DM: And did you realize what this was?

JF: No, no, I didn't. I didn't realize what it was. You know, but I knew those people in those planes was not ours.

DM: Right.

JF: Because of the size and sound.

DM: So you knew there was something wrong, but you didn't yet equate with this is the beginning of war.

JF: Well, that was shortly afterwards when our gunners started shooting.

DM: Okay. How long did it take 'em to get the guns limbered up and ready to start?

JF: Ours went quite rapidly.

DM: Okay. So you may have been one of the first ships to fight back?

JF: Well, I don't know as far as that's concerned. But you know, I—all the applications for membership for—I had four terms of the national secretary.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: All the applications for membership comes into my office.

DM: Right.

JF: And maybe I should do this one day. For every one that claims that they were the first ship to down an aircraft...

DM: Right.

JF: ...it probably equate to more planes than...

DM: Than actually flew in the attack?

JF: ...than actually flew in the attack. But you after understand it because everybody was firing. And every plane that went down, "We got it! We got it!" would probably be resounding throughout that entire harbor.

DM: Yeah.

JF: So a lot of people. Only one, we didn't get credit for it, but I think we got it because I saw this plane that was sitting up there waiting to try to sink something.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: When it bellied over and released that bomb, this, you know, they talk about these sharp shooting kids from Kentucky...

DM: Right.

JF: ...this guy was good. He stitched that thing. And you could, he was so close, you could actually see the bullet holes.

DM: No kidding.

JF: And that plane went down. But we never got credit for it, but I think we did.

DM: You guys nailed it.

JF: But we got enough. We got that submarine.

DM: When the raid starts and you go to your battle station, and you got these great looking set of whites on, I'm sure. And I don't think you changed them during this raid.

JF: Three days. (Chuckles)

DM: Three days you were in those?

JF: Yeah.

DM: Where was your battle station? Where did you go?

JF: My battle station was with the gunners.

DM: Okay. Would that be in mid-ships?

JF: Right between. There's two mounts of torpedoes.

DM: Right.

JF: Right between the torpedoes was the two fifty-calibers. But we did not have forties or twenties at that time either.

DM: Okay. So the main anti-aircraft weapon was the machine...

JF: Was the five-inch thirty-eight and plus them machine guns.

DM: And what did you do on the machine guns?

JF: Place ammunition. You know you have to stick 'em in this belt.

DM: Right.

JF: And then the belt runs through the gun and fires.

DM: Right.

JF: And that's what I was doing, on my knees and shoving them bullets in there.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And whispering a couple of prayers. I suppose the lord heard me, I know. I'm still here.

DM: Were you scared that day?

JF: Not really. Not really. I talked to various people. You always hear this stuff. I do not believe that a man in the height of combat, fear is not a factor that can be tolerated in that. You are very fearful before the action starts, just like a football player, he's all nervous before the first snap of the ball. And that's the same way. The only one thing—I don't

even know if I should say this, but you have to go to the bathroom quite often before the action starts. Once it starts, you don't have to go at all!

DM: Right.

JF: And that's the way that is. During the action, I don't recall being afraid because if fear is in your brain, you're not going to be able to function.

DM: Okay.

JF: In my opinion, now. People dispute that. They come out, there's no atheists in foxholes.

DM: That's your feeling. That's how you felt during that day. During the attack, there was numerous events that unfolded. I don't know what, what could you see from the *Monaghan*? Could you see Battleship Row?

JF: Yeah, we started out that way.

DM: Yeah, but while you were sitting there and then, could you see these torpedoes hit the battleship...

JF: No, not from where we were sitting.

DM: Okay.

JF: But when we peeled off, we was going to go out that direction.

DM: So you headed down the south channel?

JF: We went...

DM: Oh, North Channel.

JF: Yeah. I'm confused of the direction down there. We went where the *Utah* was tied up.

DM: Yeah, that's the west side of Ford Island.

JF: Okay. And the other side, I guess Commander Burford figured it was too much torpedo traffic over there.

DM: Now, did you see the *Arizona* explode or did you hear it?

JF: No, I did not.

DM: Did you hear that explosion?

JF: Well, we heard something that probably was it but I did not see it explode. Most of the time I'm looking down on the deck, you know.

DM: Right, loading these things.

JF: Yeah.

DM: When the *Monaghan* finally gets under way...

JF: Right.

DM: ...you're moving down what they call the North Channel...

JF: Yeah.

DM: ...west side, and then suddenly, I think it's the *Curtiss* notifies the *Monaghan* that there's a submarine or something out there.

JF: Yeah, that's correct.

DM: Now, can you describe what you saw...

JF: Well, I didn't see it but I seen the sub as we went by it and prior to being depth-charged.

DM: Oh really? Tell me about that.

JF: Well, we just rammed it is all we did. Buford ordered it rammed because there wasn't basically anything else he could do with it.

DM: How fast were you going?

JF: We were about doing thirty knots.

DM: That about breaks every rule in Pearl Harbor, doesn't it?

JF: Well, sure.

DM: Because that's normally about, what, eight to ten knot?

JF: Thirty knots?

DM: No, I mean normally you'd travel eight to ten knots...

JF: No, that's like, you don't go through that channel, especially if you're a larger ship...

DM: Right.

JF: ...that fast. But I think we was cranking up for thirty knots. Basically, we didn't like it in there.

DM: (Chuckles) Now you hit the sub, there is a postscript to that. What happens to the *Monaghan* after you hit the sub?

JF: Well then we depth charge it and ran aground and backed off and went to sea. And the next thing, we got some erroneous message from somewhere that Japan was landing troops on the other side of the island.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: So we went over there and found out that was bogus, wasn't happening and the only other incident right then, there was a boat.

DM: Right.

JF: And we ordered that, how they ordered that boat out of the area and they ignored us and so they fired a burst across his bow and then he complied.

DM: Was it one of the Japanese fishing sampans?

JF: It could have been.

DM: All right. But you know, Jay, you kind of glossed over this point of when the ship went aground. Now, that could've been pretty serious, right?

JF: Yeah.

DM: But you got her backed off?

JF: Yeah. And fortunately [*G.S. Hardon*] the chief torpedo man disobeyed order to drop the third depth charge.

DM: Explain to me why that would've been critical.

JF: Because we was back and down.

DM: You're back and down?

JF: And it would've blown up right under us.

DM: And he had orders to roll the depth charge?

JF: Yup.

DM: And it would've blown off the stern of the ship.

JF: Yeah, you know, they're blown off the tracks. But he realized that back and down and he didn't do it. So in fact he disobeyed his order and for this, he received a decoration. It was not a Navy Cross, but it was one of the lesser medals [*G.S. Hardon, CTM, received a Letter of Commendation from CINCPACFLT*].

DM: He used his head and disobeyed an order.

JF: Yeah, his name was [*G.S.*] Hardon.

DM: Hardon.

JF: H-A-R-D-[*O*]-N.

DM: Seaman first or something like that?

JF: No, he was chief [*torpedoman*].

DM: Chief.

JF: I always remembered him because of the gag we pulled on him. (Chuckles)

DM: What gag was that?

JF: He was also chief master-at-arms.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: And we come back from Espirito Santo with the *Minneapolis* and the *Pensacola*, who had been—the *Minneapolis* had about a hundred and some feet of her bow just hanging loose.

DM: Right.

JF: And the *Pensacola* was wounded right in her belly.

DM: Mm-hm.

JF: And they took all her ammunition off and we set out to Pearl with these two ships. And we got the *Minneapolis* as far as Guadalcanal and she started to sink. So they backed her up a river there and turned it over to the Seabees to get her patched up. And we kept going with the *Pensacola*. And then for many, many days at sea, gosh, we was on one torpedo, because we was on one screw because we had hit an uncharted rock. And we were, we didn't have both engines, 'cause the other propeller was useless.

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: So anyway, they sent us back and we kept going. I'm glad to know that the Japs didn't find us 'cause we'd been sitting ducks. But at any rate, off of Samoa, she got into trouble, the *Pensacola*. So we took her into Samoa, and they got sort of a makeshift navy yard in there. And they put a severe list on her to pull her wounds out of the water and fix her up.

In the meantime, they let us go ashore. And up in the hills, a bunch of us start playing poker. And our chief torpedoman—and they had a pretty nasty raisin'-jack there on that island and he couldn't handle it. Anyway, he got pretty loaded and

then he put on one of these lavalavas, you know, just for a gag.

DM: Yeah.

JF: And we stole his clothes, his uniform. And when we left, they took his uniform back to the ship and he had to come back, chief master-at-arms, he had to come back with his lavalava on.

DM: Which is basically a tropical g-string, wouldn't you say?

JF: Not much to it, just a wraparound thing.

DM: That must've been quite a sight.

JF: Yeah, it was. I'm glad he never found out who done it.

DM: Who did do it?

JF: Wasn't me. Was the people I was with did do it.

DM: You know, all these years have passed and you've been a member of the Pearl Harbor Survivors for some time and what's this organization mean to you?

JF: Well, it means a lot because we got a responsibility. We got a responsibility, hopefully that we'd like to be successful. The authorities to keep our military strong because there's nobody out there that really likes us and that's the bottom line. When you look at the people that are our outright enemies, there's a considerable amount. And like I've said in speeches, you know, we are not loved. And we may never be loved by other nations. And if we're not kept militarily strong, we're not going to survive either. And I believe that whole-heartedly.

DM: In a sense, Jay, would you say that that is the legacy of Pearl Harbor, in your view?

JF: Keep America alert. Keep America militarily strong. Because, in this one speech I give, I left them with a question. I left them with a question. In their opinion—I was talking to the optimist club—I says, “I’ll leave you with a question. Do you think this military downsizing as we now know it will turn out to be as foolish as the disarmament that was practiced in the late thirties and forties?”

And it was definitely a very foolish move. People don’t realize in 1940 there was more New York City policemen than there were men in the Marine corps. Navy was just in bad a shape. I don’t even think we had a 150,000 people in the navy during that time.

DM: So this military preparedness is an issue that is near and dear to most of the Pearl Harbor survivors, would you say?

JF: I would say it’s near and dear to a lot of them. I believe strongly in that myself.

DM: What about the lesson of Pearl Harbor? Obviously it’s a preparedness thing, but what’s the personal lesson that you talk about or you feel? Was it the same thing? Is it pretty much the same thing or is there some lessons to be drawn from this whole disaster that took place at Pearl Harbor?

JF: Well, I even got this one tape. It’s got the original speech of Roosevelt and it’s got the original speech of Churchill. And you listen to that tape closely, you can fully realize why we were even attacked, because Roosevelt, right on this tape, it says it. He says, “I’ll tell you parents, mothers and fathers, one more time and I’ll tell it to you again and again and again and again. No American boy is going to fight overseas.”

And if you think the Japanese and Adolph Hitler and Mussolini wasn't listening to those pronouncements, you're wrong. They knew this. They knew that the draft only passed by one vote. On this tape also is when they were drawing the first number of...

DM: Selective service?

JF: Yeah, of selective service and when they announced that number, you could hear a woman scream. That was her son's number. Now we were in no position to fight any battle, much less these well-trained people that American forces was confronted with. The Japanese was infused with this samurai philosophy, that was it. Germany, the German SS troops die for Adolph Hitler.

DM: Right.

JF: But it was a rough battle.

DM: When you go on the USS *Arizona* memorial, and I know you've been, what's that memorial also mean to you?

JF: Well, basically, maybe it's the wrong thing, my heart stayed with the *Monaghan*.

DM: Right.

JF: A guy asked me that question before and it was just around Memorial Day. I always think of them 294 guys that perished on that ship.

DM: In the typhoon?

JF: Oh yeah, in the typhoon. They only saved six off of there. And they only saved thirty off the other, and all told, off

three destroyers that capsized. But *Arizona*, it's a place of reverence. It's a graveyard.

DM: Right.

JF: And I forget who this guy is. He once—he's very dissatisfied on the lack of respect that's shown on that ship today, when people tour.

DM: Right.

JF: I mean it's supposed to be like they've entered a sacred ground, which it is. You've got 1100 people underneath your feet.

DM: Right. And that's something we could talk about because I think it was the Arkansas representative that sent a letter, which I have with me. Superintendent's quite concerned about that. First of all because we take great pains to make sure that that's occurring. Now criticism by the Pearl Harbor Survivors is a serious criticism and one that we take very personally. And we don't know what the basis of that was because we worked very hard to make sure that everyone is respectful that goes onboard. You have nearly 1,500,000 visit.

JF: Yeah.

DM: And we just think that we're not sure where this criticism is coming from or what's it based on.

JF: Yeah.

DM: But we do respect the survivors when they make those kind of comments because we feel it's their place. So it's a real interesting thing and a very difficult one for us right now because we don't have any specifics of what that criticism is.

When did this happen? What was the date? What was the incident? But it is a general overall thing. We've also had a movement from some of the survivors that want us to force people to remove their hats when they go aboard the memorial, out of respect. And those are kind of interesting issues that we have to look at.

JF: Yeah.

DM: As a—and then they've criticized it because it's run by the National Park Service. Well that's the name of the institution, but what I guess I'd love to talk to this gentleman about the idea that three-quarters of the national parks are memorials, historic houses, Washington and all of those, and that's run by the National Park Service. So I think the idea of trying to associate that this is a park rather than what the institution's name is has been unfair criticism.

JF: Yeah. Well, my experience, I've been aboard the memorial quite a bit. I see nothing wrong with it personally. But I figure where this guy come from, and he was very adamant in his criticism...

DM: Right.

JF: ...and you're probably aware of this guy too.

DM: Yeah.

JF: I'd have to look through my file. I keep that stuff.

DM: Well, I think that that's a justifiable one and one that we have to be always aware of but I just wanted to end this interview with you and thank you very, very much for sharing this time. As you know, the recollections of survivors and the commitment of the Pearl Harbor Survivors to donate a number of their items to the memorial's museum

is going to be special to all of us because you're the, you know, that special group of individuals who, I guess December 7 was the definitive moment in your lives.

JF: Well, it probably was the definitive moment in a lot of people's lives because it changed the entire political structure of the world.

DM: That's true.

JF: And it was very distressing to most of us that early on, early on everyone seemed to be more concerned with not hurting Japan's feelings. We could not get one, we could not get a media recognition of Pearl Harbor Day. And that carries on a lot. The only time—right now it's different.

DM: Yeah.

JF: My phone is ringing off the hook.

DM: Yeah.

JF: I try to hang up a coat. Three phone calls, I still had the coat. As soon as I hung up, it rang again. And...

DM: From media...

JF: It's unbelievable. It's a damn good thing, because it tells me that the media, for some reason now is calling about Pearl Harbor.

DM: Do you think it has anything to do with the survivors pushing for a number of years, through a number of administrations, to get a national day of remembrance?

JF: Yeah.

DM: And it was signed during this administration, of this one.

JF: Right.

DM: Do you think this has something to do with now, people, it's on calendars and do you think that has something to do with it? That you guys were successful?

JF: I don't know about that but I never had seen an article, especially in Milwaukee's paper...

DM: Uh-huh.

JF: ...that the Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day in perpetuity was ever signed by, or passed both houses of Congress...

DM: Signed by...

JF: ...signed by the president. I've never seen it mentioned.

DM: It was big news in Hawaii, but I think this is something that seems to be regional.

JF: Yeah, but it's right there in Milwaukee. Of course, you have to, as far as I'm concerned, the Milwaukee journalist is far to the left.

DM: Okay.

JF: Yeah, okay, that should explain that one. But at any rate, but we couldn't get a, years ago, we couldn't get one word. And even today, now you think the anniversary of Normandy—I participated in Normandy. I've got the French medal, liberty medal up in my room. I carry that with me because when people say, when I tell them I was at Pearl and I also made Normandy, well they look at me like I'm pulling their leg.

DM: Right.

JF: So I just flap this medal. And of course I altered the medal a little bit because that French medal, when they put a medal, the thing, they don't have a clasp like we got. They got a sharpened thing. It looks like a...

DM: Claw?

JF: No, not, it's metal and a very sharp, like a needle. There's two prongs on that thing, and they just hook it on your clothes. Of course, you know I'm a sailor. I said, "I wonder how they work this when they have to pin a medal on a woman." I think it might be a little dangerous, you know.

But anyway, I carry that with me because, as I say, they think I'm, you know, stretching the truth.

DM: Well you and the *Nevada* were both there then.

JF: Yeah, you got it. That was great seeing the *Nevada* loud. And I hadn't seen the *Nevada* since she was sitting in the mud.

DM: At Pearl.

JF: At Pearl.

DM: And then you saw her off Normandy coastline.

JF: Firing them fourteen-inch projectiles. Yeah, that was great.

DM: Great story.

JF: We stayed there eighty-two days. First month a little bit rough, almost constant general quarters.

DM: Yeah.

JF: But the first part was awful. That movie, I didn't see the movie. I didn't have to see it.

DM: *Saving Private Ryan?*

JF: Yeah. Because, you know, naturally I was there. And you know, this thing about this medal, when I talk to the optimist club, immediately a guy asked me if I saw that movie. I said, "I didn't have to. I was there."

You could tell the look on his face, this guy's a B-Ser, you know. So I need to break out the medal. I says, "Take a look at this. It's the French liberty medal."

And Normandy invasion people got this. If you wasn't at Normandy, you didn't get it.

DM: So Jay, I want to thank you for this interview.

JF: Yeah, I was glad to do it.

DM: And I hope that in the future, if you think of anything, I'll be sending you a transcript and everything, and you just add to that. But I really appreciate you taking the time to do this interview with us.

JF: Well, it's no problem. I was interviewed by people in my basement, in my office in the basement, for an hour and twenty minutes. Looking at everything I had and nothing to do with Pearl Harbor, but they were just looking at it anyway.

DM: Got quite a collection down there.

JF: Well, it's from other ships that I was on. I was on five ships during the twenty years. My last two was carriers.

DM: Well, thank you very much.

JF: I love the navy, still do.

DM: Let me get this clip for you.

JF: Okay.

END OF INTERVIEW